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# Mitchell comes to terms with role of inmate

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Exiled from the rarefied lifestyle he knew as corporate attorney and Cabinet officer, John N. Mitchell is coming to terms with his new existence as an inmate in a federal prison camp.

His only familiar creature comfort may be the tobacco with which he stokes his everpresent pipe. Although pouches of Prince Albert are provided free to inmates, Mitchell sticks with Bond Street blend, available at the prison commissary.

The former attorney general began serving a 2½- to 8-year sentence June 22 for his role in the Watergate cover-up. Those who have visited him say he is adjusting well to life at the Maxwell Air Force Base prison camp.

"I think he's tough as he can be," said one recent visitor to the minimum security facility, observing that Mitchell's morale is good after almost five weeks as a prisoner. "He has a lot of personal courage and stamina."

The camp has been described by some as having a "country club" atmosphere because of its bucolic setting along the banks of the Alabama River. But even a brief visit leaves no doubt that it is a prison, where personal freedom is limited.

The 63-year-old Mitchell is confronted with a myriad of unfamiliar conditions from the moment he awakens each morning in the bottom tier of a double-deck bed squeezed into a 6-by-7-foot cubicle in one of the camp's seven dormitories.

Warden R.W. Grunski insists that Mitchell is accorded no special treatment, an assertion backed by persons who have visited the camp.

As an example, the man who once had a direct telephone line to the White House switchboard must now wait his turn at a bank of four telephone booths to make contact with the outside world.

All calls are collect. Inmates are not allowed to carry any cash.

Mitchell was convicted, along with former Nixon chief of staff H. R. Haldeman and domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman, on charges of conspiracy to obstruct justice, obstruction of justice and lying under oath in connection with the Watergate cover-up.

Grunski refuses to discuss specific details of Mitchell's activities at the camp. But the following description of the life he leads can be pieced together.

Mitchell's day begins at 6 a.m., Monday through Friday, to the sound of a "good morning" greeting carried by loudspeakers into the single-story stucco dormitory he shares with more than 40 other inmates.

On weekends, when there are no work assignments, the day starts an hour later.

He dresses in the khaki shirt and pants he received when he first entered the prison camp and heads for the

cafeteria-style dining hall for breakfast, along with the some 300 other inmates.

Before reporting to the education office where he works as a clerk during the week, Mitchell returns to the newly airconditioned dormitory to make up his steel-frame bunk and clean his cubicle.

The 5-foot-high partitions that divide the large room into individual living areas provide some privacy.

But, for Mitchell, that privacy is diminished by having to share the cubicle with another man, whom the prison will not identify. When Mitchell gains some seniority, he will be in line for a living area of his own.

Security at the camp is light. There are no bars, walls or high fences to keep prisoners inside, only the knowledge that escape and capture would mean assignment to another prison with tighter security and more restrictions.

Mitchell, who as attorney general was the nation's chief law enforcement officer, is said to converse freely with his fellow inmates. There have been no reports of a recurrence of the taunts that greeted him when he first arrived.

His new associates have been incarcerated for a variety of crimes, all nonviolent. Almost half were convicted on charges of larceny or theft, often involving interstate transportation of stolen cars, or on narcotics charges.

Bootleggers and moonshiners, who made up 48 per cent of the prison population just five years ago, are down to about 5 per cent of the total.

Only 3 per cent of the inmates are serving time for such white-collar pursuits as income tax evasion and embezzlement.

Most are from the Southeast; 70 per cent are white, the remainder black or Hispanic. The median age is 28.

For his clerical work, Mitchell is paid \$25 a month, a far cry from the \$400,000-\$500,000 a year salary he is said to have commanded as one of the nation's leading bond attorneys.

He also is working on a book, the notes for which he carried into the prison in a satchel and briefcase.

Lights out is at 10:30 p.m. during the week, but, if he chooses, Mitchell may stay up later to watch television on the black and white set mounted on the wall of his dormitory's recreation room. Or he may read in the "card room."

Saturday night is movie night in the prison's auditorium but because of a limited budget, the warden says, most of the movies already have been on television. A recent feature was "The Godfather."

Inmates are allowed to purchase \$50 worth of items a month from the prison commissary, including tobacco products, cookies and soft drinks, which they store in lockers at their dormitories.

Since alcoholic beverages are banned,

Mitchell has had to forego the martinis he was known to enjoy on the "outside."

Packages from friends and relatives are restricted to Christmas, with the exception of certain emergency situations.

The camp food, though far from the gourmet fare available to Mitchell during his heyday, is substantial and varied. Such local foods as okra, collards and fried yellow hominy appear frequently on the menu.

Inmates may supplement their diets with meals brought in by visitors, often eaten picnic style on the grounds.

Unless Mitchell's sentence is reduced by U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica, it will be late 1979 before he is eligible for parole.

In the meantime, his official identity remains tied to the prison number he was issued when he first entered the camp: 24171-157.